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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 ASUNCION 000430

SIPDIS

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(THOREL), ECA/PE/C (LPEREZ), WHA/PDA (GOULD), WHA/BSC  
(MURRAY)  
POSTS FOR PAOS AND CAOS

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: YALE SPIZZWINKS CAPTIVATE PARAGUAYAN AUDIENCES

1. Summary: In conjunction with a performance in Buenos Aires, 14 members of the Yale Spizzwinks a cappella choir performed two standing-room only concerts in Paraguay on March 17 and 18. Their unique and engaging blend of music and humor, combined with their youthful enthusiasm and Spanish-language abilities, fascinated Paraguayan audiences. Home stays allowed for one-on-one cultural exchanges which amplified the success of the program. Media coverage was extensive and included a live broadcast of a short Spizzwinks performance. End summary.

#### Performances and Activities

2. The Spizzwinks gave a master class at the Paraguayan American Cultural Center in Asuncion to kick-off their tour. One of the Spizzwinks who reportedly speaks 12 languages taught the master class in Spanish. Approximately 100 members of various Paraguayan choirs attended the class, many of whom had come from towns up to 200 miles away. During the question and answer portion of the class, the audience asked not only questions regarding musical technique but also inquired about life at Yale and ways in which universities in the United States support the arts. The class ended on a festive note with the audience divided into their respective vocal parts and learning an a cappella arrangement.

3. The following night the group performed in the Paraguayan American Cultural Center's 300-seat auditorium. The Ambassador and his wife attended the free, public-access concert, which was sold-out three days in advance. Members of the audience tapped their feet and occasionally sang along throughout the 1 hour and 45 minute performance. One of the highlights of the show came when each of the Spizzwinks introduced themselves to the audience. Even the non-Spanish speakers read a few translated sentences, much to the crowd's delight. A member who stated that he wanted to live in Paraguay when he "grew up" drew thunderous applause from the audience. The audience thanked the performers with a standing ovation and was thrilled when the Spizzwinks returned for an encore.

4. Villa Hayes, the regional center of a remote and seldom-visited Paraguayan state, was the next stop for the Spizzwinks. The 500-seat church where the concert was held was full 30 minutes before the scheduled start time, a rarity in Paraguay where most performances begin at least 30 minutes late. By the time the free, public-access performance began all available standing room in the church was filled and eager spectators strained to catch a glimpse of the performers from the plaza outside of the church. Individual introductions were again a highlight of the performance and when one of the singers used a Guarani phrase (Paraguay's official indigenous second language) the largely rural crowd cheered and stomped their feet. Afterwards, departure was delayed by a full hour while the Spizzwinks attended to autograph-seekers and new fans, including the state governor.

#### Media Coverage

5. Media coverage of the Spizzwinks was unusually extensive. All three major dailies published multiple stories on the tour. "ABC Color", Paraguay's largest and most influential daily, ran six stories on the performances over the course of one week, including two glowing reviews. As coverage of cultural events in the Paraguayan press is usually limited to pre-performance announcements, the publication of these reviews testifies to the excitement and enthusiasm generated by the Spizzwinks.

6. Radio Nanduti, the most listened-to radio station in Paraguay, aired an interview with the musicians and broadcast cuts from their CDs for several days leading up to the performances.

7. Red Guarani, a Paraguayan television network that targets viewers in the rural areas of the country, broadcast a live interview with some of the singers on the day of

their Asuncion performance. The Spizzwinks also sang to a nation-wide audience during the broadcast.

#### Home-stays increase cultural exchange

18. Paraguayan families hosted the Spizzwinks for 3-day home stays. Families were selected from members of local choral groups, which lead to immediate camaraderie between the performers and their hosts. In addition to lowering posts' costs, this proved an invaluable way for Paraguayan families to have a first-hand experience with Americans and American culture.

#### Funding

19. The Yale Spizzwinks did not charge a fee for their performance and generously provided their own plane tickets to Buenos Aires using proceeds from performances and CD sales. Airfare from Buenos Aires to Asuncion was funded by the binational center in cooperation with TAM airlines, which provided several free tickets. Post covered local production costs and visa costs while local institutions provided in-kind support.

110. Comment: At a time when the USG is actively working to promote study in the US, high-caliber performances by university groups, such as the performances by the Yale Spizzwinks, are very effective vehicles through which to pique the interest of potential students. These performances, which reached audiences in areas of the country usually without access to such information, has done more to enliven interest in studying in the US than any single event held in Paraguay within the last year. In addition, the home stays that formed part of this program were a low-cost and very effective channel through which to give Paraguayan families the opportunity to interact with young Americans of similar interests on a one-to-one basis. A brief live television concert vastly increased the audience reached. Finally, the program gave Post the opportunity to promote mutual understanding with the Paraguayan people by sharing a unique part of American culture through the universal medium of music. End comment.

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